Iowa conservationist

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Volume 36, Number 5 May 1977

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Front Cover: 1977 Iowa Trout Stamp Design by John Bald, 5023 N. Pine, Davenport, IA 52806.

Published monthly by the Iowa Conservation Commission, State Office Building, 300 4th Street, Des Moines, Iowa 50319. Address all mail (subscriptions, change of address, Form 3579, manuscripts, mail items) to the above address. Subscription price: one year at $2.00; two years at $3.00; four years at $5.00. Second class postage paid at Des Moines, Iowa and other points.

Preventing Gun Accidents in the Home

by Bob Mullen
STATE CONSERVATION OFFICER
Photo by the Author

IF FIREARMS were properly and safely stored in the home, the occurrence of home firearm accidents could be drastically reduced. Firearm accidents in the home are the result of a lack of common sense, or a lack of thoughtful precautions.

A hunter returning home from a long day in the field, places his gun and ammunition in a corner and thinks, "*I'll take care of it later*". Such an incident creates a potential accident. If we think about it, there are no accidents with guns; only carelessness, ignorance, and a lack of common sense. Every member of a household needs to be familiar with gun safety in the home. And strict enforcement of these practices must be followed by all.

How firearms are stored in the home presents different problems in different settings. The arrangement that exists for a person living alone may not work for a home where children live. Varied opinions exist on keeping firearms in the home. Some people feel all the family members should be instructed in firearm usage, and that no one should handle a firearm without the parent's permission. Others feel that all guns should be locked up and out of sight, "secret" from other family members. I have encountered parents that tell me they keep all their guns loaded in the house, that their children know they are loaded, and that they are not to touch them. Such a practice is foolish. Children are attracted to guns and no account has been taken for the children's friends that are often in the home. It only takes one incident to find out the hard way that loaded guns should not be in a home.

There is no one method of dealing with firearm storage that is better than other methods. But there are some general guidelines which should be practiced. Common sense demands that all guns be kept out of the reach of children, and immature and irresponsible adults. I have seen 5 year-olds that show more respect towards firearms than some 50 year-old adults.

Rifles, shotguns, and handguns should at all times be in a rack, cabinet, or closet that is locked. These firearms should also be unloaded. Ammunition should be kept in a separate place, away from the guns,

(Continued on Page 15)

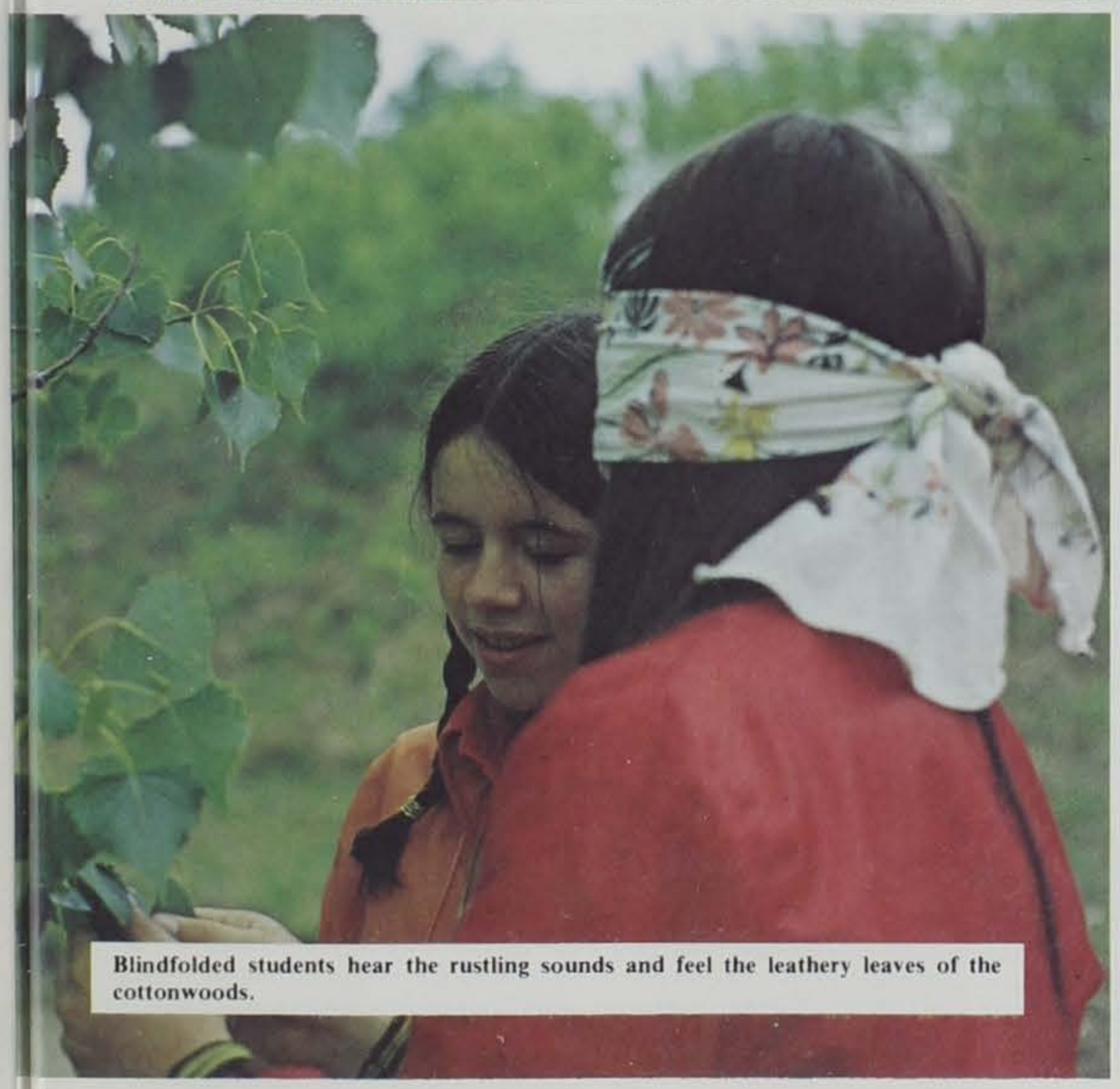
STONE PARK - an outdoor classroom

by Carolyn Benne

Photos by the Author

SIXTH GRADE STUDENTS and their teachers come to Stone Park each spring to investigate, to explore, to see . . . Classes climb out of the buses and walk upon the land. They move of their own moving, touch the earth, breath the air, feel their bodies alive. Activities are designed to capture the childlike excitement of discovery, to open the senses to all the sights, sounds, smells and textures of nature.

Class walks are zestful! They have pizazz, sparkle, vitality, and relish. They are designed to create a breathless sense of awareness, excitement and wonder. In one day, students become familiar with a variety of habitats. They encounter different plants and animals—continuous change—as they trek from the stream, through the woods, to the pond and upland, to the prairie ridges.



Blindfolded students hear the rustling sounds and feel the leathery leaves of the cottonwoods.

From the sounds of students at the stream, leaders have learned not to expect tedious conceptualization, but leaping awareness, as they discover snails, crawdads, and leeches under logs and leaves in the water.

Observations are shared of the bloodroot, dutchmen's breeches, solomons seal, false solomons seal, columbine, jack-in-the-pulpit, phlox, carrion flower, violet, poison ivy, etc., which adorn the woodland slopes and ravines in great numbers.

Students view the world of little things. Some of nature's most exquisite handiwork is on a miniature scale. Hand lens studies of moss, buds, leaves, and flowers reveal unexpected beauty and complexity.

The forest floor is an accumulation of leaves, petals, fruits, seeds, bud scales, twigs, limbs, whole tree trunks, feathers, fur, animal carcasses, feces. This debris is ground up, chewed, dissolved and eaten by millions of tiny plants and animals called decomposers. These basic substances are returned to the soil and air and again become available to green plants for food making. Students scoop up a handful of the forest floor—feel its weight and temperature, smell it slowly and deeply until it becomes familiar to them. At first they see little life in it, perhaps only an earthworm or a few black ants; as they look closer they begin to see smaller creatures, mites and tiny spiders. There are millions upon millions of living single-celled plants and animals in a handful of rich soil.

The pond is a symphony of sounds. It's a prime area for bird study. Red-headed woodpeckers, a kingfisher, orioles, rose-breasted grosbeaks and cardinals are often seen, even occasional wood ducks.

The pond contains a fantastic collection of life. Children, at first glance are delighted with whirligig beetles, snails, fish and frogs in the water. Upon closer examination, they discover that the water contains a myriad of smaller organisms, worms, tiny crustaceans, such as cyclops or daphnia, insect larvae and perhaps even a tadpole or two. Using hand lenses and microscopes, students learn, through their own observations, about the tremendous variety of living things in the pond.

Children look for tracks and traces of unseen animals, and sense their presence. Who lives in the park? What are the animals that leave footprints in the mud and tracks on the dusty trails? What has gnawed the bark or clipped the twig? Classroom visitors learn to "read signs." They watch for tracks, droppings, gnawings, scratchings, rubbings, nests, burrows . . . Wherever an animal goes, it

leaves behind it a detailed record of its visit. Ernest Thompson Seton has said, "The trail in its entirety was begun at the birthplace of the creature and ends only at its death . . ."

At the old quarry site, evidences of an ancient shallow sea are discovered. Sedimentary layers of shale and limestone croppings contain fossils of ancient marine animal life: oyster-like shells, fish scales, sharks' teeth (known to have flourished in the ocean at that time) and occasionally the remains of fish skeletons. This vast inland ocean occurred in what geologists call the "Cretaceous Period," a time when dinosaurs were still upon the earth and human beings had not yet appeared.

Small prairie grasslands are mixed with areas of forest on Stone Park ridges. Students delight to spittle bugs and yucca plants. Quiet times there enhance the non-verbal skills of watching, waiting, and listening.

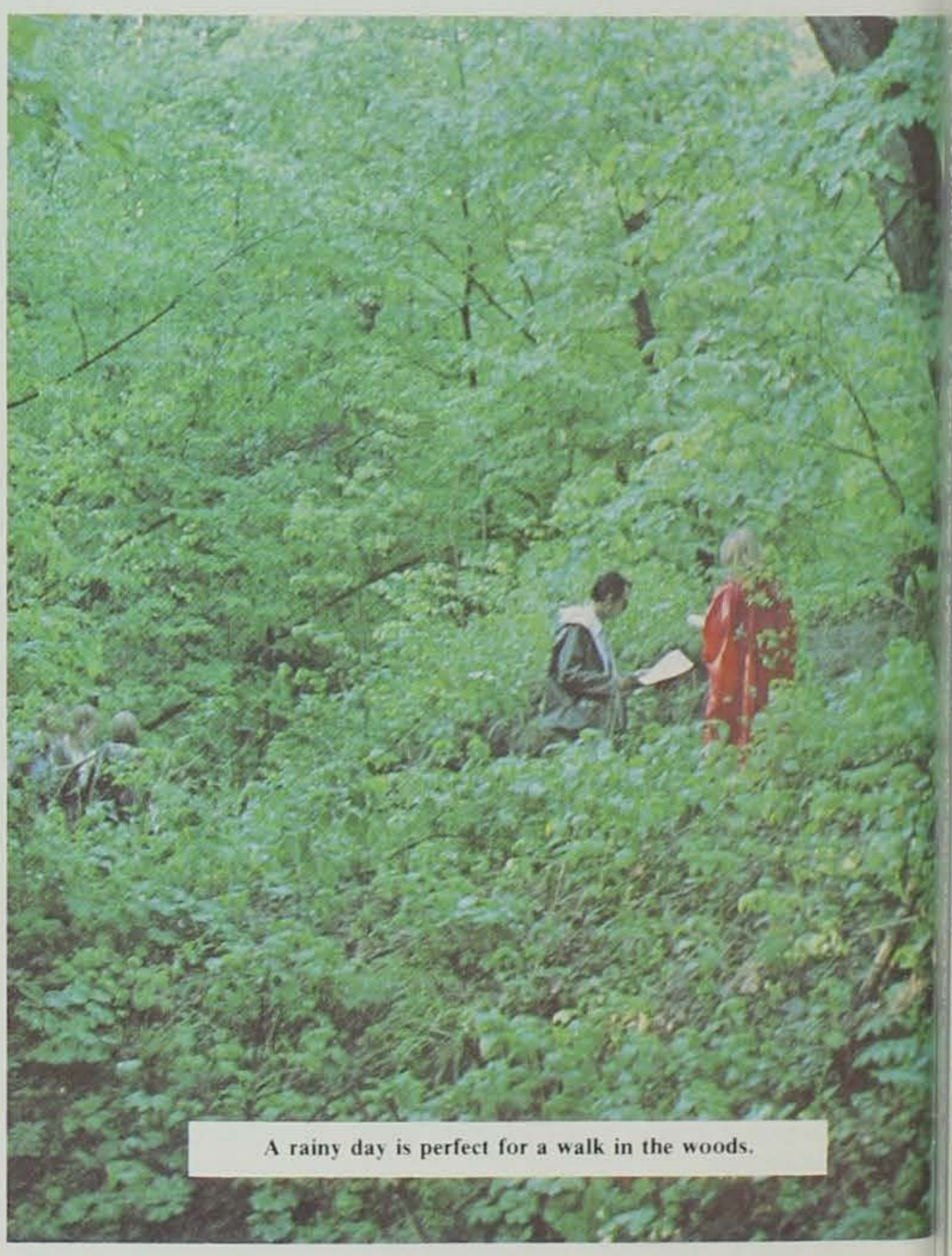
Field trips are taken rain or shine! A rainy day is perfect for a walk in the woods . . . woods never seem so fresh and alive as in wet weather. All the lichens and mosses come alive with green and silver freshness. Stone Park is a protected natural community. Every twig, every plant, every stone is protected by state law for present and future generations. Students and teachers "tread lightly." In regard to lunch bags and other litter, schools have established the policy that everything brought into the park is taken out of the park.

Dale Brumm, state park ranger, has been a supporter of the program since its beginning, providing classes with descriptive literature on Iowa mammals, tracks, birds, wild flowers, trees . . . Approximately, 11,250 sixth graders have participated in this annual all-day field experience in Stone Park since it began in 1967. This year 45 teachers from Sioux City and area schools brought approximately 1,125 students to Stone Park. Some classes were accompanied by volunteer and professional assistants: parents, building aides, principals, and/or college students. Each class spent an hour with this author learning about the local animals: turtles, salamanders, snakes, minnows and crawdads.

As part of this program, teachers and volunteers participate in a pre-field trip workshop arranged by Elementary Health, Science and Environmental Education for Area Education Agency 12. Environmental materials, ideas and activities are shared and explored. Related books, guides and materials are available for loan to interested teachers, from the A.E.A. 12. The Stone Park field trip is a basic unit in the sixth grade curriculum for many schools in Woodbury County. □

Miss Benne is a Consultant in Elementary Health, Science and Environmental Education, Area Education Agency 12, Sioux City, Iowa.

Left, top: Intense observations reveal crawdads in the water. Center: Hand lens studies disclose unexpected detail and beauty. Below: Students learn to "read signs" as they look for tracks and traces of unseen animals.



A rainy day is perfect for a walk in the woods.

State Park Camping 1977

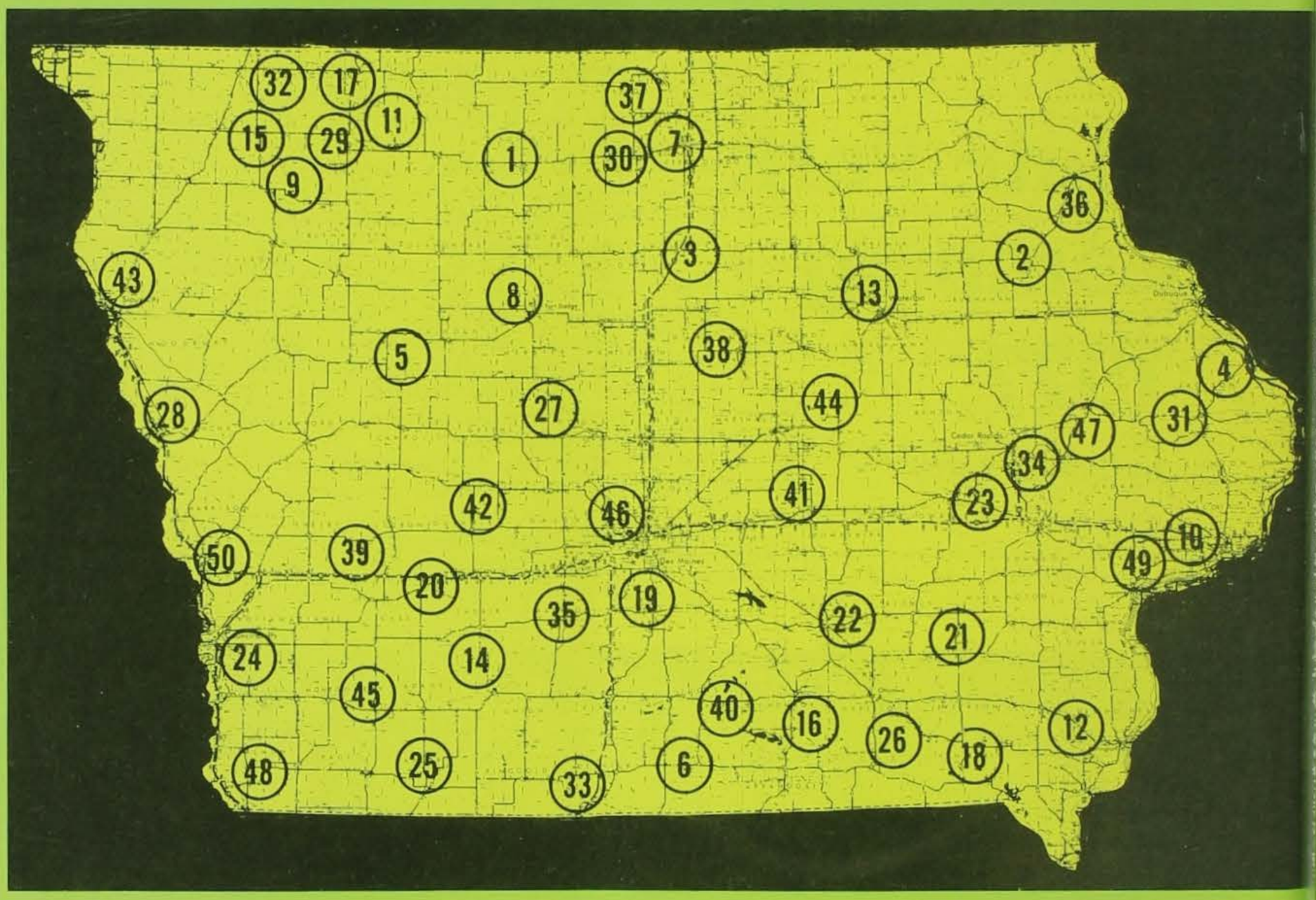
by Sonny Satre

Photos by Jerry Leonard

THE MORNING AROMA of fried eggs and bacon filtering across Iowa state park campgrounds is a sure sign the camping season has once again returned. State park campgrounds are a favorite weekend retreat for many—over 400,000 campers stay overnight each year.

Besides enjoying nature's unique handiwork—wildflowers, woodlands, streams, glacial formed lakes, wildlife and scenic overlooks—there are a number of man-made essentials and attractions that draw people to the campgrounds. Among these include modern camping necessities such as electrical hook-ups, shower facilities, flush toilets and other sanitary facilities, drinking water and sewage dump stations for trailers. Recreational attractions include hiking and bridle trails, man-made lakes, beach facilities, picnic tables and shelters, boat ramps, canoe and boat rentals, fishing opportunities and food and bait concessions.

There are 34 state parks that are classified as modern campgrounds. Modern areas are those which include shower and flush toilet facilities. The rate for camping in modern areas is $3.00 a night per camping unit. If there are more than six people in a camping unit, an additional 25¢ is charged for each extra person.



From among the state's 50 parks where camping is permitted, 18 offer non-modern campsites. Two parks offer modern and non-modern camping facilities (Backbone and Lake Macbride). The overnight fee for these areas is $2.50 a night per camping unit. Electrical hook-ups are available in 37 state parks for which there is an additional $1.00 fee per night. All camping sites are available on a first-come, first-served basis. No reservations are accepted.

*Quotas have been finalized for campers this year in most state parks (see accompanying state camping faclities guide). Quota systems are also being planned for the remaining state parks in the near future. Some of these quotas are subject to change with the planned development of additional sanitary units in certain parks. All public campgrounds will be required to meet these regulations in the coming years. When the assigned camping sites are filled, no additional campers will be permitted in the park until there is a vacancy. Prior to this newly adopted system, campers were allowed to park their campers almost anywhere in the camping area to a "bumper to bumper" capacity. Park officials recognized the problem and agreed this didn't offer a quality camping experience. Besides offering a more pleasant camping outing, this new system will help prevent overuse of existing facilities.

Listed below is your Iowa State Park Camping Guide with existing facilities and recreational opportunities available:

** In accordance with State Department of Health standards, a quota system is being implemented in state park campgrounds this year. The standards allow for a maximum of eight camping units per sanitary installation (urinal or commode) in each area. This figures out to be 32 persons per sanitary installation.*

STATE PARK CAMPING GUIDE

* (N) No Size Limit
(6) 6 H.P. Limit
(E) Elec. Motors

Map No.	State Parks	Mailing Address	Telephone	Location - Highway	Camping (M) Modern (N) Non-Modern	No. Camping Sites (X — No Quota)	Dump Station For Trailer	Electricity	Trails (H) Hiking (B) Bridle	Swimming (S) Supervised (U) Unsupervised	Fishing (L) Lake (S) Stream	Lake Acreage (N) Natural (M) Man-Made	Boat Rental	Boat Ramp	Boat Motor Size *
1	Ambrose A. Call	Algona	515-295-3669	1½ Mi. S.W. Algona	N	25			H						
2	Backbone	Dundee	319-924-2527	4 Mi. S.W. Strawberry Point—IA. 410	N-M	300	●	●	H	S	L-S	125M	●	●	6
3	Beeds Lake	Hampton	515-456-2047	3 Mi. N.W. Hampton—Co. Rd.	M	144	●	●	H	S	L	130M	●	●	6
4	Bellevue	Bellevue	319-872-3243	½ Mi. S. Bellevue—U.S. 52	M	X	●	●	H						
5	Black Hawk Lake	Lake View	712-657-8712	Lake View—IA. 175	M	176	●	●		U	L	957N	●	●	N
6	Bob White			1 Mi. W. Allerton—IA. 40	N	32		●	H	U	L	115M		●	6
7	Clear Lake	Clear Lake	515-357-4212	2 Mi. S. Clear Lake—IA 106	M	128	●	●		U	L	3643N	●	●	N
8	Dolliver Memorial	Lehigh	515-359-2539	3 Mi. N.W. Lehigh—IA. 50	M	41	●	●	H		S				N
9	Emerson Bay	Milford, Rt. 2	712-337-3634	2½ Mi. N. Milford—IA. 32	N	144				U	L	3939N	●	●	N
10	Fairport	Muscatine, Rt. 3	319-263-2791	5 Mi. E. Muscatine—IA. 22	N	X		●			S			●	N
11	Fort Defiance	Estherville	712-362-2078	1 Mi. W. Estherville—IA. 9	N	32		●	B-H						
12	Geode	Danville	319-392-4601	4 Mi. S.W. Danville—Co. Rd.	M	200	●	●	H	S	L	205M	●	●	6
13	Geo. Wyth Memorial	Waterloo, Rt. 2	319-232-5505	Adjoining Cedar Falls—U.S. 20	M	48		●	H		L-S	20N		●	N
14	Green Valley	Creston	515-782-5131	2½ Mi. N.W. Creston—Co. Rd.	N	112	●	●		S	L	390M	●	●	**6
15	Gull Point	Milford	712-337-3631	3½ Mi. N. Milford—IA. 32	M	112	●	●	H	U	L	3939N	●	●	N
16	Honey Creek (Rathbun)	Moravia, Rt. 2	515-724-3739	9½ Mi. W. 3½ Mi. S.E. Moravia—Co. Rd.	M	160	●	●		U	L	11000 M		●	N
17	Isthmus Access			N. Shore E. Okoboji Lake	N	32					L	1873N			N
18	Lacey-Keosauqua	Keosauqua	319-293-3502	Adjoins Keosauqua—IA. 1	M	176		●	H	S	L-S	30M	●	●	E
19	Lake Ahquabi	Indianola	515-961-7101	5½ Mi. S.W. Indianola—IA. 349	M	160	●	●	H	S	L	130M	●	●	6
20	Lake Anita	Anita	712-762-3564	3 Mi. S. Anita interchange—I-80	M	128	●	●		S	L	171M	●	●	6
21	Lake Darling	Brighton	319-694-2323	3 Mi. W. Brighton—IA. 78 & 1	M	80	●	●		S	L	320M	●	●	6
22	Lake Keomah	Oskaloosa	515-673-6975	5 Mi. E. Oskaloosa—IA. 371	M	88		●	H	S	L	82M	●	●	E
23	Lake Macbride	Solon	319-644-2200	4 Mi. W. Solon—IA. 382	N-M	160	●	●	H	S	L	950M	●	●	6
24	Lake Manawa	Council Bluffs	712-366-0220	1 Mi. S. IA. 192—Council Bluffs	M	75		●		S	L	660N	●	●	N
25	Lake of Three Fires	Bedford	712-523-2700	3 Mi. N.E. Bedford—IA. 49	M	60	●	●	H	S	L	125M	●	●	6
26	Lake Wapello	Drakesville	515-722-3371	6 Mi. W. Drakesville—IA. 273	M	88	●	●	H	S	L	287M	●	●	6
27	Ledges	Madrid	515-432-2730	6 Mi. S. Boone—IA 164	M	32	●		H		S				N
28	Lewis and Clark	Onawa	712-423-2829	3 Mi. N.W. Onawa—IA. 324	M	80		●	H	S	L	918N	●	●	N
29	Lower Gar Access			½ Mi. S.E. Arnolds Park—U.S. 71	N	32					L	273N			N
30	McIntosh Woods	Ventura	515-829-3847	¼ Mi. E. Ventura—U.S. 18	M	48				U	L	3643N	●	●	N
31	Maquoketa Caves	Maquoketa	319-676-3251	7 Mi. N.W. Maquoketa—Co. Rd.	N	32			H						
32	Marble Beach			2 Mi. N.W. Orleans—IA. 276	N	112				U	L	5684N		●	N
33	Nine Eagles	Davis City	515-442-8718	6 Mi. S.E. Davis City—Co. Rd.	M	128	●	●	H	S	L	56M	●	●	E
34	Palisades-Kepler	Mount Vernon	319-895-6039	3½ Mi. W. Mt. Vernon—U.S. 30	M	75		●	H		S			●	N
35	Pammel	Winterset	515-462-2188	5 Mi. S.W. Winterset—IA. 92-162	N	32			H		S				
36	Pikes Peak	McGregor	319-873-2341	3 Mi. S.E. McGregor—IA. 340	M	80	●	●	H						
37	Pilot Knob	Forest City	515-582-4835	4 Mi. E. Forest City—IA. 9	M	80	●	●	B-H		L	15M			E
38	Pine Lake	Eldora	515-858-5832	½ Mi. N.E. Eldora—IA. 118	M	96	●	●	H	S	2L	101M 89M	●	●	6 E
39	Prairie Rose	Harlan	712-773-2701	9 Mi. S.E. Harlan—Co. Rd.	N	117				U	L	210M	●	●	6
40	Red Haw Lake	Chariton	515-774-5632	1 Mi. E. Chariton—U.S. 34	M	80		●	H	S	L	76M	●	●	E
41	Rock Creek	Kellogg	515-236-3722	6 Mi. N.E. Kellogg—Co. Rd.	M	200	●	●		S	L	640M	●	●	6
42	Springbrook	Guthrie Center, Rt. 1	515-747-3591	8 Mi. N.E. Guthrie Center—IA. 25-384	M	256	●	●	H	S	L	27M	●	●	E
43	Stone	Sioux City	712-255-4698	N.W. Sioux City—IA. 12	M	96		●	B-H		S				
44	Union Grove	Gladbrook	515-473-2556	4 Mi. S.W. Gladbrook—Co. Rd.	N	32		●	H	U	L	110M	●	●	6
45	Viking Lake	Stanton	712-829-2235	4 Mi. S.E. Stanton—Co. Rd.	M	128	●	●	H	U	L	150M	●	●	6
46	Walnut Woods	Des Moines, Rt. 3 Box 133	515-285-4502	4 Mi. S.W. Des Moines—IA. 5	N	32		●	B-H		S				N
47	Wapsipinicon	Anamosa	319-462-2761	Adjoins Anamosa—U.S. 151	N	80			H		S				N
48	Waubonsie	Hamburg	712-382-2786	7 Mi. S.W. Sidney—IA. 239-2	M	128	●	●	B-H						
49	Wildcat Den	Muscatine	319-263-4337	3 Mi. E. Fairport—IA. 22	N	32			H						
50	Wilson Island	Mo. Valley	712-642-2069	5 Mi. W. Loveland—Co. Rd.	M	X	●	●	B-H		S			●	N

The Mississippi River —A Dying Resource?

by Don R. Helms
FISHERIES RESEARCH BIOLOGIST

FOR CENTURIES the Father of Waters flowed undisturbed from the heart of North America to the Gulf of Mexico. Constantly meandering and ever cutting new channels it carved its basin, creating multitudinous variety in habitat and niches where life flourished. A tediously slow but never ending process. Never ending? Well, not until white men came upon the scene.

Its discovery by Marquette and Joliet in 1673 marked the beginning of demise for the river. This unbelievable resource, overwhelming at first, was a challenge to be conquered—a new found highway and home for man. Settlements sprang up at the mouths of tributary streams and mines were gouged in her bluffs. Timber was cut from the watershed and floated on her own waters to downstream destinations. Bountiful game was raped by market hunters and shipped to distant parts of the country.

These things the Mississippi could tolerate, but man's never ending struggle to improve in the name of progress has finally struck a resounding blow. Cities grew, industries developed and pollution came spewing forth like vomit. Modern abatement programs have helped arrest this problem, but with development, the all-mighty dollar commands a need to ever-improve navigation.

At first it was a simple matter of removing snags to make way for vessels with a 4-foot draft. Then came dikes to divert the river's flow to a central channel and increase it's depth to 6 feet. Finally came construction of the locks and dams for the creation of a 9-foot channel.

At first the dams were a boon. Water levels were stabilized and by impounding water, they increased surface area and created more diversity in habitat. Fishing was particularly good—and still

Photos by the Author

An aerial view of the rich backwaters showing evidence of a meandering channel in years past.

is—near the tail-waters of these dams. But what is happening to our grand old river? For centuries it was free to meander and cut new channels as the old ones closed through attrition to become sloughs and then marshes. There was a natural balance.

Now the central flow of the river is a heavily used navigation channel. We can't afford to let it become shallow or meander and cut new passages to rejuvinate the backwaters. In the name of river transportation and the economy of our country, the channel must be maintained. This means stream flow through the backwaters must be restricted and diverted to the navigation channel and shoaling areas are dredged repeatedly. No more meandering.

Meanwhile, eutrophication and natural succession compounded by dredge spoil depostition continues to convert backwaters to shallow marshes which eventually become dry land. To compound the problem, the dams are acting as silt traps causing our rich backwater lakes and sloughs to fill at an accelerated pace. The natural balance has been destroyed.

The future is even more dismal. Economy demands larger vessels and there is talk of a twelve-foot channel. Where will it stop? Sixteen-feet? Eighteen-feet?

One day there will be no Mississippi River—just a ditch. You say you don't believe it? Well, just turn around. Look to the west. You see it? Yes, it's the Missouri "Ditch". □

Near Lansing, Big Lake—pictured in the upper center—is filling rapidly and is destined to become a shallow marsh.

How long will it be before the Mississippi becomes a ditch like the Missouri?

Waste material gushing from an outfall line of a distant chemical plant. Underwater discharges are usually out of sight—and out of mind.

Wingdams, though usually submerged, divert the river's current to the navigation channel and prevent meandering.

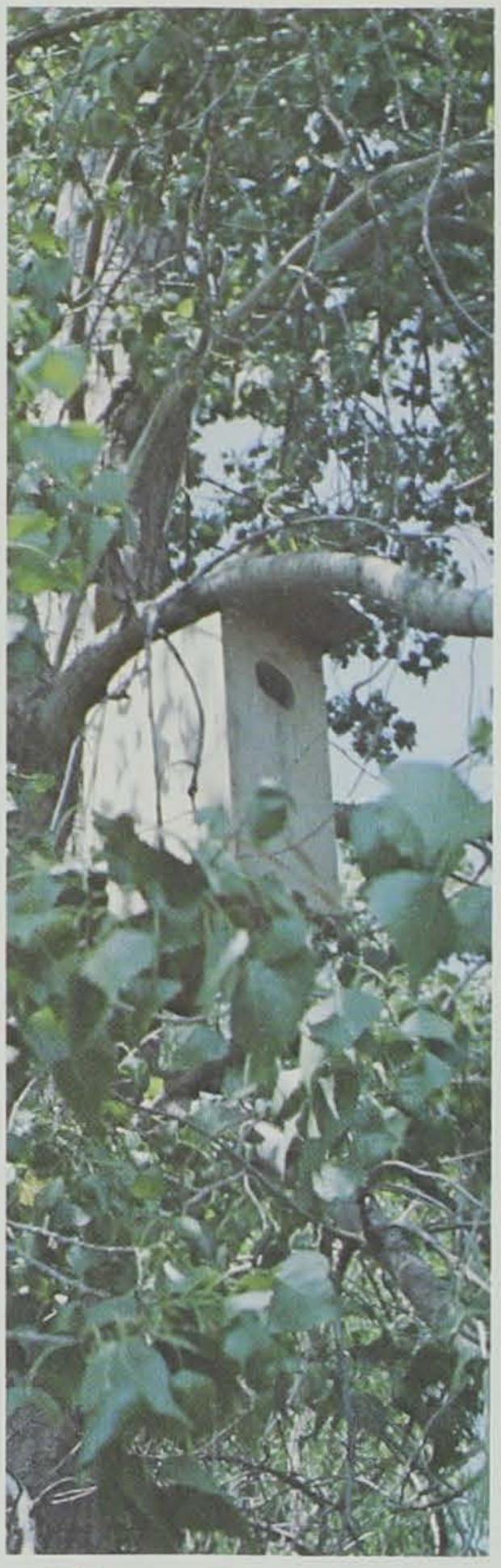
A combination of pollutants exuding from a metropolitan area.

Heavy oil accumulations from a freight yard accident.

Sewage slime accumulates on a string 20 miles downstream from its source. Sewage slime is a bacteria which thrives on nutrients introduced by sewage plants and grain processing companies.

Dredge spoil deposits such as this could eventually seal off the backwaters.

Spoil deposits have destroyed thousands of acres of prime duck marsh.



Northwest Iowa's Wood Duck Man

by Douglas Harr
WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BIOLOGIST

Photos by the Author

TO MOST PEOPLE, northwest Iowa evokes thoughts of flat or gently rolling farmlands, vast fields of corn and soybeans, and expansive vistas broken only here or there by a farmstead windbreak. But to one resident of this great agricultural "factory", this otherwise little recognized corner of the state is a paradise for wood ducks.

You may raise your eyebrows at the suggestion but Joel Boeyink, an English teacher from the little town of Alton, is setting out to make this unusual dream come true. And so far, he has succeeded very well.

It all started back in 1972 when the Alton Jaycees decided to do something for the town's burgeoning wood duck population. Ducks from the nearby Floyd River were nesting in the city's trees. To woodies flying over Alton looking for places to nest, the city trees must appear as a good sized piece of timber. Local citizens didn't mind the nesting ducks, but problems arose when children began bringing home young ducklings. The hens, after pushing their offspring out of their nesting holes and watching them bounce harmlessly to the ground, could not get the young safely to water before they were snatched up. Boeyink and the Jaycees thought that if the birds could be encouraged to nest outside of town, the "ducknapping" problem would subside. A project was initiated to construct wooden nesting boxes and erect them on trees or posts along the Floyd River.

The project started out with ten Jaycees building and putting up a dozen boxes in 1972, but no data was kept to find how successful it was. Additional nest boxes were constructed by other interested individuals in town, and in 1973 the first two known broods were raised from the 16 boxes available. A small start, but to Boeyink and the Jaycees, the project was bound for success.

Since that time, Joel has become more or less the chief project coordinator and nest builder, head of nest box maintenance, record keeper, and overall driving force for the nest box program. While he carries out most of the work himself, the Jaycees have continued to cover much of the cost.

Boeyink's records offer firm evidence of the project's benefits. For each nest box erected, a separate page of information is kept in a loose-leaf notebook and data for each nest, including maintenance performed and success rates, will be entered for ten years. Space is even provided for a photograph of each nest installed in place on tree or post. In addition, a yearly summary sheet is kept, totaling the data from individual nest records. This page chronicles such items as number of nests, nest relocations and repairs, dates of first duck sightings and nest attempts, nest success, use of boxes by other wildlife, and comments or recommendations.

The records reveal that in 1974, 22 nests were available, ten hens nested and 50 young were raised. In 1975, 26 hens successfully raised 20 broods (about 200 young) in the 33 available boxes. And in 1976, 256 ducklings were produced by 32 hens from 46 nest boxes available. One of the real keys to making this project such a success has certainly been in the keeping of accurate records to document increases in the local duck population. This data can easily tell whether or not the efforts have been worthwhile.

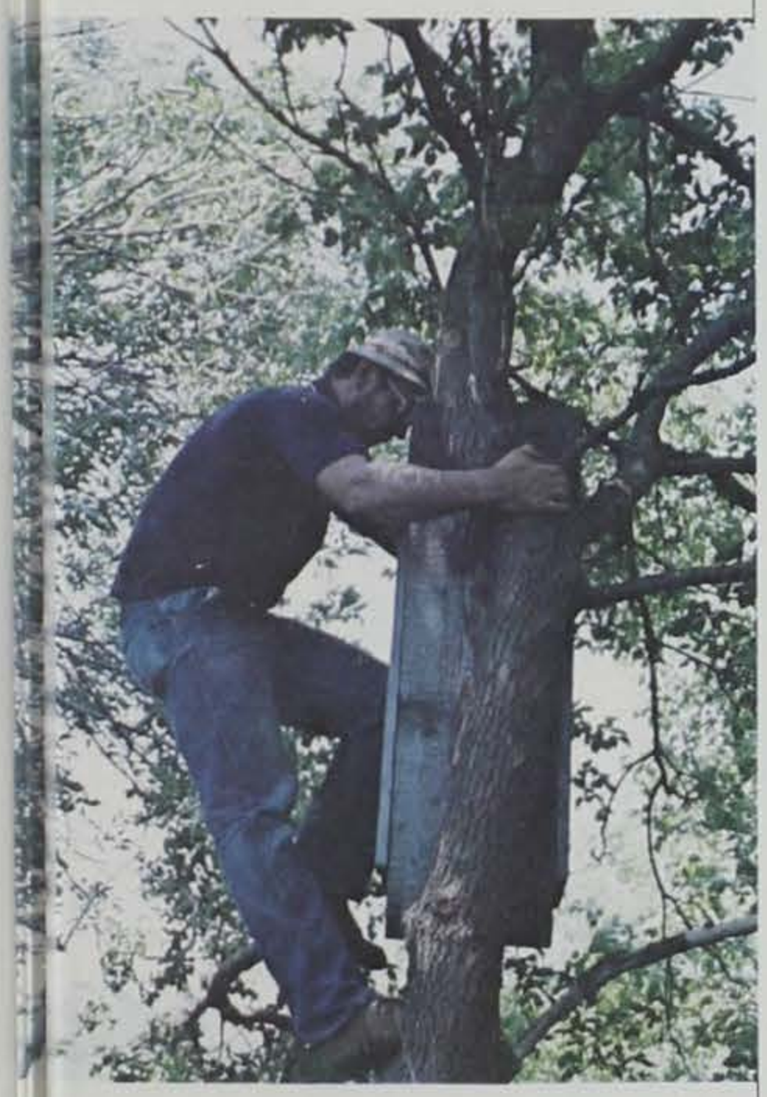
Joel followed advice from the *Iowa Conservation Commission* in the project's initiation and got additional hints from reading about similar efforts in eastern Iowa and Minnesota. His conscientious maintenance of the nesting boxes assured that each spring, returning woodies would not turn their backs in disgust on unkempt living quarters. But such conscientious attention requires considerable work. Early in the project, Boeyink dispensed with hauling around unwieldy ladders and took to climbing trees to erect and maintain the boxes. Now he scales trees with the dexterity of a ten-year old. Each nest is checked several times a year, so tree climbing has almost become a way of life with him. This familiarity with his ducks has also made Joel perhaps the most knowledgeable wood duck expert in the region.

Peeking into nest boxes often provides some surprises. Joel has found squirrels, starlings, mice, flickers, owls, and bees inhabiting what is supposed to be reserved for wood ducks. Even the woodies themselves are sometimes surprising. Hen wood ducks occasionally use "dump" nests; that is, several hens will lay eggs in one nest with no intention of incubating. One box was discovered to contain more than 30 eggs, with one lone egg sitting on the nest's roof. It appeared as if the last hen found found things just too crowded inside, so finished the job of laying her eggs upstairs instead.

Projects like the one being continued by Joel Boeyink and the Alton Jaycees are helpful for increasing the supply of these colorful waterfowl in the prairie farmlands of Iowa. What's more, these projects can greatly enhance relations

between farmers, townspeople, and sportsmen. This has certainly proven true around Alton, where all landowners approached by Boeyink have been very willing to let him erect nesting boxes in trees along their riverfront property. And almost everyone involved in the program has learned much about the natural history of wood ducks.

So if you happen to be driving along the Floyd River near Alton someday and see a grown man hanging precariously in a cottonwood tree, wave—you've just passed Joel Boeyink, northwest Iowa's own "Wood Duck Man", and a good friend of wildlife. □



FROM THE

Warden's diary

by Rex Emerson

LAW ENFORCEMENT SUPERVISOR

It had been a most enjoyable day at Shimek State Forest in the southeastern part of the state. The turkey season had brought 125 hunters to that area to try their skill on Iowa's big game bird. Just before noon when the shooting hours would end for the day, some of the hunters began stopping at the check station. Two hunters each had a nice tom turkey. They were very proud, and rightfully should have been. The other hunters were more than a little envious and listened intently as the successful hunters told and retold the thrill of their hunt. The rest of the hunters thought maybe tomorrow might be their day.

If you have ever hunted wild turkeys you know you don't just blunder around out in the woods and walk up on a turkey. The average run-of-the-mill Iowa deer hunter wouldn't make a very good turkey hunter. The good turkey hunter will wear camouflaged clothing and smear some black stuff on his face. He gets hidden in the underbrush and squawks on a turkey call hoping an old gobbler will come within gun range. Most of the hens are setting on a nest some place out in the forest. When the tom turkey hears the hunter working the turkey call he is supposed to go to where he hears the call. It doesn't always work! With the undergrowth getting more leaves on it all the time it is harder to see the turkey if he does respond to the call. There are a lot of turkeys in Shimek Forest, but most of the hunters will not be successful in getting one, especially the first year they try. That old turkey is smart. He will walk in toward the caller and will usually take his own sweet time doing it. Sometimes he will circle around and come in behind the hunter. The slightest movement by the hunter will send the turkey off like a shot. As big as he is, he can fly right up through the treetops like a quail.

After having lunch at that nice little cafe on the banks of the Des Moines River in Farmington, I went back out to the forest. The main reason was to make sure there was no turkey hunting going on after noon. It was interesting to stop in the camping areas and talk to some of the turkey hunters. One man told about a nice big turkey that he saw coming across a small clearing toward him. The hunter's attention was momentarily drawn away from the turkey by a fox that had just pounced on a mouse only a few feet away. When he looked back, the turkey was gone. He decided that if he didn't get a turkey, his experience with nature made the trip worthwhile. One hunter told about sitting in the brush when a turkey came up behind him. He said, *"There is* **no way** *you can turn around from a sitting position and get a shot off at one of those birds in the brush."* Then with a broad smile he said, *"Isn't this turkey hunting just the greatest sport in the* world?"

And then I ran across a hunter whose lack of success is always the fault of someone other than himself. You know the type. You find one occasionally in every sport. I listened to him awhile telling about *"If the Commission would do this . . . and if the other hunters would do that . . . and if this and if that . . . ."*

I finally told him, *"If a frog had wings he wouldn't bump his little behind every time he jumped,"* and went on my way.

Shimek Forest is a big beautiful, wonderful place. As I walked out through the woods, I thought how nice it is that the people of Iowa have a place like this to enjoy nature. There is good hunting. Several turkey hunters told me they saw some deer. The ponds provide some good bass fishing and there is free primitive camping. Quite a few people go there during the year, but so far it is unspoiled. Once in awhile you find someone who is too lazy to walk and takes off through the woods on a trail bike. When we catch one of them, he gets two choices. He can either push the bike back to where he came from, or carry it. Then he can go to court. He gets no choice about that. Vehicles are restricted to the roads and parking areas.

When you walk through the woods, enjoy it, but leave it so the next person will think he is the first one to have ever walked that way.

The Otter Creek Wi

by Robert Kurtt
WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BIOLOGIST

Larry Pool

Bob Kurtt

THE OTTER CREEK WILDLIFE UNIT is comprised of five counties in east-central Iowa. All but one of these counties are located in the eastern livestock region. Grundy County is the northern-most county and is situated in the cash grain region of Iowa. For the most part, Grundy County and the northern half of Marshall and Tama Counties are very intensively farmed areas with flat to very gently rolling topography. The southern portion of the unit, including Iowa and Poweshiek Counties, consists mostly of rolling land with some steep areas along the Iowa River.

Generally, the northern half of the unit is a cash grain area with corn and soybeans the main crops. The southern half is divided between cash grain areas and livestock farming.

Some important stands of timber exist along the Iowa River in Marshall, Tama and Iowa Counties. Although most timber areas in the Unit are pastured at the present time, there are some real fine timber areas that are under timber management plans. Included in this are approximately 10,000 acres of Amana Society timber in northeast Iowa County. Main timber species under management are walnut, white and red oak, hackberry, silver maple, and cottonwood.

Wildlife Unit

All major lakes and marshes in the unit are man-made. Otter Creek Marsh near Chelsea in Tama County and Hendrickson Marsh on the Marshall-Story County line are the only two major marsh areas in the unit. Union Grove Lake and Otter Creek Lake in Tama County, Diamond Lake in Poweshiek County, and Lake Iowa in Iowa County are all man-made impoundments open to the public.

Photos by Jerry Leonard

Game species in the unit include pheasant, quail, waterfowl, rabbit, squirrel, raccoon, fox, coyote, deer and woodchuck. Pheasants are found throughout the unit, but are most abundant in the southern half where better cover is available. Quail are limited for the most part to the southern part of the unit, mostly in brushy areas in Iowa and Poweshiek Counties. Rabbits are found throughout the area where good brushy cover and grassy nesting areas exist. Squirrels (mostly fox squirrels) abound in timber areas over the entire unit. Raccoon are also distributed over the entire unit, and are found in about all types of habitat. Fox are likewise common over the area, and coyote appear to be most numerous in southern unit counties. Waterfowl are distributed up and down the Iowa River and major tributaries, and during spring and fall migration are especially numerous at Otter Creek Marsh and Hendrickson Marsh.

Upland game hunting in the unit is primarily centered around deer, pheasants and rabbits. Pheasant hunters generally find more birds in the southern portion of the unit, although good local populations exist in some northern unit areas. The combination of agricultural fields and brushy draws in southern unit areas is very inviting to ringnecks. By comparison, intensive agriculture in the northern part of the unit has severely limited pheasant nesting cover and winter cover.

Rabbits provide good hunting in the southern part of the unit, especially after snow is on the ground. In northern areas rabbits are concentrated around farm buildings where they find adequate nesting and winter cover.

Deer hunting is increasing in popularity each year and for the most part, good hunting can be found in and around good timber stands along the Iowa River in Marshall, Tama and Iowa Counties.

Quail populations are marginal in the unit, and hunters find the most birds in Iowa and Poweshiek Counties. Brushy draws and odd areas interspersed with crop fields provide the quality habitat that quail prefer.

Squirrel hunters have no trouble finding enough of their quarry, especially in the extensive stands of timber along the Iowa River.

Waterfowl hunting is also growing in popularity in this area, and good hunting can be found along the Iowa River and its tributaries, and also along other streams and ponds in the unit. Most natural upland ponds and marshes have been drained, but a good number of backwater ponds and sloughs still exist along the Iowa River in Tama and Iowa Counties. An increasing number of farm ponds in the southern part of the unit are being used by both nesting and migratory waterfowl, and will probably become even more important in the coming years.

Fox hunting has been a long-time favorite of many hunters in the area, and now coyote hunting is increasing in importance as these large predators gradually move into the unit. Coyotes are apparently more abundant in southern unit counties at this time.

Rail and snipe hunting is not widespread in the unit, but may increase as hunters realize the sporting quality of these migratory game birds. These species are found throughout the unit in the fall of the year, and can be hunted in bottomland sloughs as well as upland pastures and fields where there is plentiful moisture. □

CLASSROOM CORNER

Photos by LeRay Moore

by Robert Rye

ADMINISTRATOR, CONSERVATION EDUCATION CENTER

In today's world we hear about the many problems of our environment . . . pollution, shortages, and misuse of our natural resources. We of the over-30 generation are trying to start the pendulum swinging toward the wise use of these resources—both renewable and non-renewable.

We, the leaders, officials, scout leaders, club members, and educators, must try to develop a group of citizens which will carry this ball for years to come. One way to be sure of the continued wise use of natural resources is to educate. Public awareness through meetings, laws, and classes is one means of education. We at the Conservation Education Center are continually adding to the resources available for classes.

Most recent is the addition of our outdoor classroom. Many can learn with and from our efforts. The Conservation Education Center personnel working together with the other conservation-interested groups have developed trails, ponds, terraces, native grass and wildlife plantings and an arboretum.

The National Guard from Atlantic provided trails for the Center and received training for their scout platoon. The Soil Conservation Service, Wildlife and Parks Sections of the Iowa Conservation Commission helped to build three ponds and a terrace. The State Forestry Section and Green Thumb employees have planted trees in the arboretum and also windbreaks, food plots and travel lanes for animals.

Above: Teachers explore native grasses. Below: Another tree is planted for the Center's arboretum.

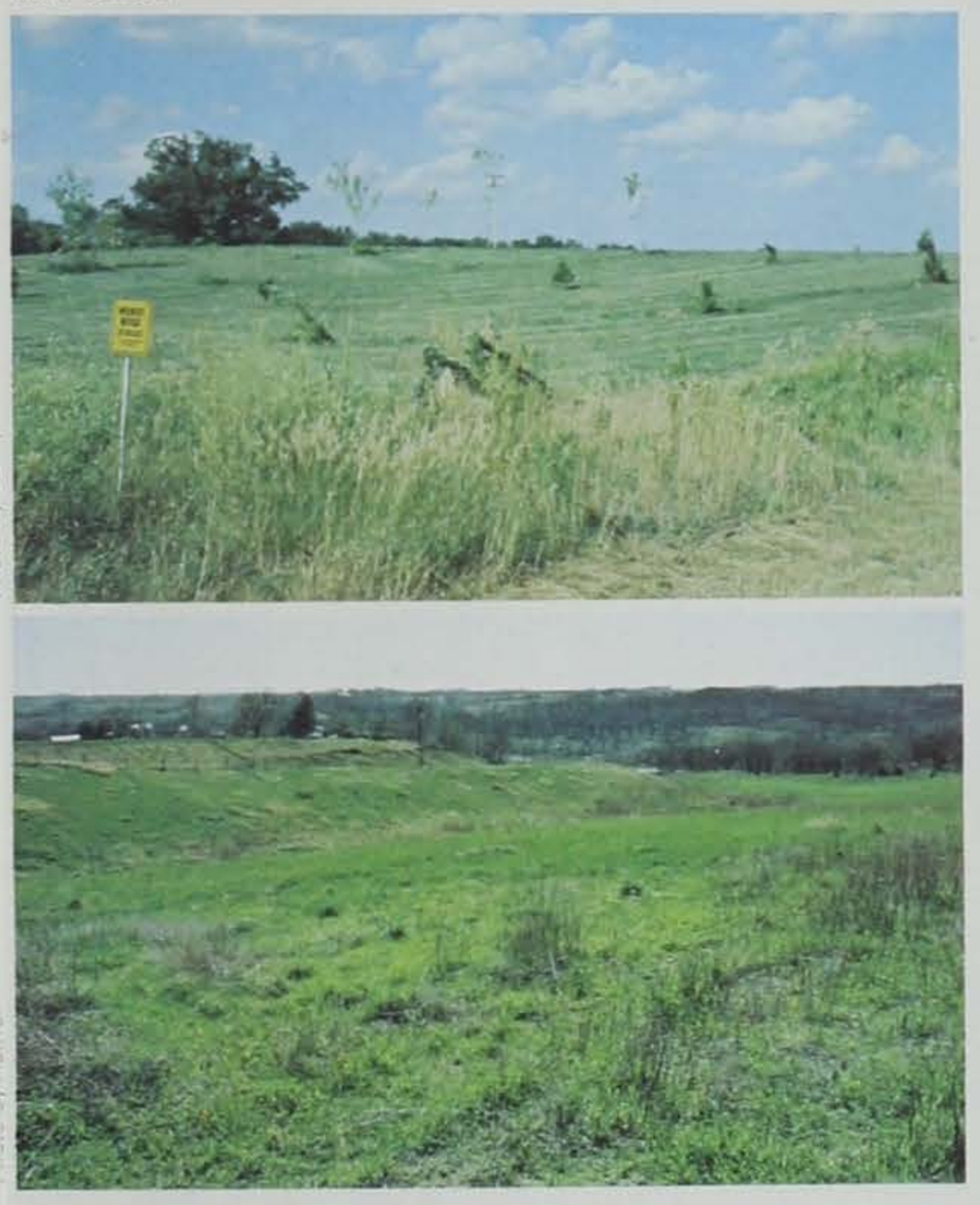
Through many persons' efforts, the Education Center now has an opportunity to add to its many "hand-on" experiences available to conservation-interested groups. I would like to explain a few of these. Some of them may be used in your school outdoor classroom, or may stimulate adaptations to lessons the students are presently working on.

A shocking example came to my attention with a group at the Center last summer. I asked them to identify a picture of a terrace and a drop inlet. One or two out of *sixty* could identify these structures.

Have your students walk an area and determine the slopes they are walking. Can they tell which way the water will flow? Have them look closely at what is under their feet. Will the material there hold the soil? Will it slow the water? We are well aware now that if the water moves slower we might have more moisture now and also less soil would wash or be blown away.

Did you ever stop to think about why rivers go over their banks? Do you think that the soil in the bottom of the ponds and river bottoms may have an effect on this? What about the speed

Below: Future windbreak has been planted. Bottom: Succession area near center.



that the water gets to the ponds and rivers? What about the speed that the water moves down the river?

These are some of the questions that groups try to answer using the Education Center, its streams, terraces, ponds, and grass-land areas.

The pictures of native grasses, succession areas, arboretum, food plots and wind breaks briefly suggest some of the many new programs which are available to groups now using the Conservation Education Center.

Many of these can be studied by teachers using the Center during Drake University's summer class, June 13 through 22nd, 1977. This class is available for graduate credit and will provide needed help in using the outdoors in art, language, math, social and biological science classes. Help is available for both elementary and secondary teachers. More information on the class and funding assistance may be obtained by writing *Robert Rye, Jr., Administrator, Conservation Education Center, Route 1, Box 44, Guthrie Center, Iowa 50115.*

The Iowa Conservation Commission and the staff of the *Iowa Conservationist* mourn the loss of Wayne Lonning who was chief photographer for the Information and Education section for over eight years. Mr. Lonning suffered a fatal heart attack on April 6 while in the field on assignment. He was 47.

While Lonning concentrated mainly on cinematography the last few years, his interesting photographs were featured many times in the *Iowa Conservationist*. He first joined the Commission in 1964 and served as Superintendent of the License Section. He became chief photographer in 1969. We who enjoyed his friendship and the many who enjoyed his work will miss him deeply.

— The Editors

PREVENTING GUN ACCIDENTS IN THE HOME

(Continued from Page 2)

and locked away. Many times it is best that the firearms and ammunition not be visible while stored. When they are out of sight, they do not invite a would-be burglar. Homes where firearms are easily seen are very appealing to burglars, as guns are a desired item to most burglars.

The only reason for having a loaded gun in a home is for protection against criminal intruders, but there are two different viewpoints on this subject which should be examined. Some people believe that no gun should be kept loaded in the home. If a loaded gun is needed, the gun and ammunition should be taken from storage and brought together. But people who have an emergency where a loaded gun is needed may not always have time to unlock the gun and ammunition and get the gun loaded. No matter how a person feels about this, he must not create a situation that invites a potential accident setting.

Many parents feel that instruction and warnings to children are sufficient, but a gun out of sight and properly stored does not pose the hazard of a more readily available gun. It is better to be overly safe in home gun storage, and to properly combine the proper storage and instruction of firearm safety. Even though you may store your guns and ammunition safely, your children might obtain a gun and ammunition elsewhere. Education is one of the best preventatives. Parents should teach the fundaments of gun safety to children at an early age, and continue the lesson as they grow older. It is still important to teach firearm safety to children if you do not have guns and ammunition in your home. Everyone comes into contact with a firearm sometime in their life, and if all people knew how to properly handle a gun, many accidents could be prevented.

Stone Park by Jerry Leonard